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WHAT THE GODS REPLIED.

Yes, we have come amongst you, to make our abode in your midst. You may not see our faces yet, but the divine voice you shall hear, in great things and small. For to us there are no small things, but all are of the infinite, and from eternity. You shall hear our word in your midst, with counsel and comfort. And these are the signs whereby you may know it:

Whatever words bring strife and enmity, whatever words are bent against the mortal part of another, censuring weakness or imputing blame, be sure the voice is not of us. For we speak only of the immortal part, ever bringing courage to the fallen, and hope to those who are cast down, always reminding you and all others of your joyous divinity and power.

Whatever word makes for separation among human hearts, crediting all virtue and worth to these and not to those; whatever strengthens the dream-barriers that keep men's souls apart, is no word of ours. But if there be a message of generous understanding of another heart, another nation, another race, drawing all together in the sunshine of the One, know it is we who speak.

Whatever voice shall speak of darkness, of weariness, fainting and despair, whatever counsel utters the name of surrender, know it is not ours. For we tell of vigor and immortal youth, of valor and invincible courage, of the glad unconquerable soul.

THEOSOPHICAL ACTIVITIES.

With the opening of the new year we are well launched into the New Century.. It is not the mere novelty of the thing that moves us, nor will the mere exchange of salutations and congratulations represent our appreciation, or measure our duties. If there is such a law in Universal Nature as Evolution, there can be no standstill in the life of individuals or of nations. We are either evolving or degenerating. Formation: Dissolution: Reformation, is the Law, but whether reformed on a higher or lower plane is *the* question. We cannot change the law, *but we can determine the plane.*

The progress of physical science has immensely contracted space and time, and actually knit humanity together closer than ever before, and while doing this, has precipitated issues upon us as never before. In the January FORUM, a most graphic picture is given of the "Karma of Nations", an object lesson writ large upon the scroll of Fate and Time that even a fool should be able to understand.

The nations are even now trifling with the Law and imagining a vain thing as they rage together. The very air is pregnant with impending conflicts, and the "many old scores" referred to by H. P. B. are hot upon us all. None of us can escape the issues. The life and the fate of individuals run *pari passu* with that of nations.

The T. S. as an organism came, under the working of Cyclic Law, to the stage of Dissolution. No matter how or by what agencies. History is irrevocable and each may read its lessons for himself. From the condition of trust and confidence and leaning upon a head or an oracle, the pendulum swinging to the extreme of distrust and repudiation. To many the light on the sacred altars grew dim, to some it disappeared altogether. At such a time, and under such stress there is no place for laudation or self-complacency. We are all Brothers, and those who never lost Faith but who *only waited*, had and have for their reward the duty of service, and the power to help. For two years the FORUM has stood as a light in a dark place, serene and confident, with not a sentence to revoke, not a word to wound, nor yet waiting idly for the darkness to disappear. Here lay the rejuvenating nucleus, waiting and serving for the time of Re-formation. Never was there a more complete demonstration of the saying—"They also serve who only wait". The steadfastness, the serenity, the strong Faith of so large a number in the face of the sorest trial, shows how deep the lessons learned had become rooted in the soul. With the new cycle everything is swinging into

place. The principles for which the T. S. was undertaken are voiced everywhere, and our co-workers may be counted by legions. Names and organizations and slogans may differ, but the trend is everywhere the same. The "first object" is under way to an extent never before witnessed and diffused in the history of man. There has been no step backward, and no delay. Let us hasten now to understand. There has never been a day since 1878 when the present writer enlisted "for the war" in the old T. S. when it seemed so strong and promised so much as to-day. Never a time when so many were ready for the "Great Work" and so capable of carrying it on. The Editors of the FORUM have already sounded the "advance," like the call of a silver bugle from the watch towers, echoing over the mountains of Time. Clear above the din of battle—"Peace and good will to man". With an assurance born of knowledge into which discouragement or doubt never enter, it embodies both confidence and hope such as only real knowledge can give. Not a note of detraction; not a cry of complaint; not a tone of regret; but a royal welcome to all. Forward! We are all *One!*

The fortress is invulnerable, the legions unconquerable, the victory sure. Recruits will find an open door, and the same bounty to all, but we may not seek them afar. There are enough, and yet there could never be too many. What the outer organization may be need not worry us. We have learned to know each other, and to *stand*. Now we can co-operate and *advance*.

"Behold the truth before you; a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for one's co-disciple, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction, a loyal sense of duty to the Teacher, a willing obedience to the behests of Truth, once we have placed our confidence in, and believe that teacher to be in possession of it; a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the secret science (Gupta Vidya) depicts—these are the golden stairs, up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom".

These principles can never fail or be set at naught. If *we* have failed let us gather strength from defeat, learn charity for those who also stumble or get bewildered, and again clasp hands and—FORWARD!

J. D. BUCK,
President T. S. A.

THE SINS OF A GREAT CITY.

We have received from Arizona a mournful picture of that land of desolation, of sandy wastes dotted with grim and bristling cactuses, of the hills rotting under the glare of sunlight, of the forbidding barrenness of the huge and melancholy deserts. With this picture comes a suggestion of why these things are so: a vision of the days gone by, that sowed the seed of this bitter harvest; of a race of evil men, a remnant escaped when Atlantis sank beneath the ocean, and whose sensual sins were so black and foul that they corrupted the very air of the land they lived in, leaving that vast putrefaction as the tomb of their evil deeds, a monument and warning to those who should come after them.

That the warning is not unneeded, we are admonished by an outcry which has just been raised, against the vice and heathenism of the greatest city in the New World, the second city on earth. It is said, and with every appearance of truth, that there are more heathens in this great city than there are in Tokio, the second in rank among the heathen capitals of the world. And it is further said that a recent crusade, carried on with much self-righteousness against the sins of sensuality, has had the one effect of flooding the more fashionable quarter of the town with forms of sensual self-indulgence that were once thought to be limited to the poor and low quarters. The crusaders against sensuality, joining hands with the preachers against irreligion, boldly proclaim New York one of the wickedest cities on earth; a fit candidate, therefore, for just such a fate, just such waste and rottenness and desolation, as overtook the deserts of Arizona, if we are to trust the moral of the vision.

Let us, as practical reformers, as believing ourselves to have some insight into the Law, some hold on the laws of physical and moral health,—let us consider the matter, looking first to the facts, and then to the remedies proposed by the crusaders. As to the mere facts, there seems to be no doubt whatever. It is a question of counting heads; of adding all the congregations of church-goers together, and subtracting these from the total bulk of the inhabitants. If we do this, we certainly come to a sum-total of heathenism far greater, in reality, than that of any city in "heathen" lands. For it is only from the point of view of missionary collection boxes that the lands of the Orient are to be considered heathen; in simple truth, if we except Russia, which is at heart Oriental, it is only in Eastern lands that we shall find any popular faith among the masses at all, faith which runs through all the week, which is valid in money matters,

which tinges the practical conduct of the whole of life, so that men consciously live in the presence of invisible and spiritual powers.

If we take this true test: a daily and hourly sense of our spiritual life,—then there are no heathens outside of Christendom. And for our personal part we can say this, that we had infinitely rather trust ourselves unreservedly, in purse and person, to the Mohammedans of Stamboul, the wild Turcomans of northern Persia, the peasants of Central China, or the hill-tribes of the Vindhya mountains, than to the population of any great city in Europe, or of many great cities in America. Where the Orientals are keen for vengeance, or treacherous against the stranger, it will always be found that they have had a too close acquaintance with the bearing of the White Man's Burden, and the measureless hypocrisy and fraud that has gone with it. But throughout the whole East, from blue Marmora to the breakwaters of the Flowery land, there are unnumbered millions of men whose generosity, kindness, truth, hospitality we would very freely pit, not only against the heathen classes in New York, but against the very church-goers of that great city, who are now crusading against these.

As for the accusation of neglect of religious services, there is a terrible counter-indictment to be brought against the priests turned atheist, if not in profession then in practice, if not in word, then in deeds which go far deeper than words, deeds which come from the heart, while words come but from the lips.

How many of those who are making the churches ring with their gospel are in the church because they really know something of the present immortality of the soul and its bearing upon mental and natural life; how many, because preaching the gospel is a form of livelihood, a safe refuge from the bitter struggle for life? How many of those who are in the churches from real conviction, will courageously preach the teaching of their Master: Blessed are the poor; hardly shall a rich man, or he who trusts in riches, enter into the kingdom of heaven? Is it not a matter of common notoriety that this nation does most unreservedly trust in riches? That the morning and evening prayer of well-nigh the whole seventy millions begins: O Dollar our Father Almighty? And what answer does the pulpit make to this? Is it not the old cowardly one of palliation: Sleep on and take your rest!

What wonder, then, if in face of a church that is wholly worldly and materialist, that mildly panders to the lust of wealth, what wonder if the greatest city in the New World is daily growing more

frankly atheistic; if there are increasing hundreds of thousands and millions who never think of entering a church door, and who, if they did so enter, would hear any doctrine under the sun but that real gospel of the Kingdom preached by the martyr-sage of Galilee?

If we turn to the second charge against this great city, its sensual sins, our sympathies are wholly with the Sadducees and against the Pharisees. What is sensual sin, after all, but the desire of sensation? And on what is this whole huge money-grubbing hive based, but on that very thing. Bitter accusations are brought against the women who lend themselves to this service of sense, but what, in perfect justice, is done by all the women of the idle classes in this broad land? What is their practical creed, but the pursuit of sensuous excitement, in one form or another, whether it be in what are supposed to be the graces of social life, while they are really for the most part meaningless grimaces, or in that dilettantism in art which is certain death to every artistic ideal? Are they not one and all, from the age that should bring discretion, to the time of ill-disguised paint and wrinkles following this very thing: the lust of sensation? And if we somewhat closely regard the matter, on what grounds do they enjoy immunity from work, from that individual search for sustenance which is Nature's universal law? Is it not tacitly on the ground of sex? And is not the meaning of this, however well hidden, that the consideration they offer is the power of ministering to sensation, in return for which they receive free support. We shall return again to this theme, but we may note, in passing, that it is only possible to maintain a great class of women in expensive idleness by two expedients—the almost universal presence of usury, and the unfair division of the fruit of jointly undertaken work. Where great fortunes are suddenly amassed, one of these two things is invariably present: unfair division of common fruit, or usury. So that the women of the idle classes have small cause to be uncharitable to the Magdalens, who very often have purer hearts than they.

We must in no sense be understood to fall into the gross fault of railing accusations, of wild and intemperate condemnation of this our human life. We hold, far more clearly and definitely than most of those who volubly talk of a gospel of love,—we hold that there is almost measureless goodness and kindness everywhere in human hearts; that there is hardly a life so abandoned, so outcast and darkened, but there is in it some echo of that grand song of joy which is the voice of our eternal life. But this we do say: we would much

more confidently search for the gleams of human sunshine among the poor and outcast of the earth, among these very Magdalens, than among the "well-to-do" classes, as they are called, who have erected their pyramid of prosperity above the great masses of human pain, holding themselves aloft by ruthlessly thrusting others down, and building up a wholly inartistic and ugly luxury on the fruits of the spoils of usury and unfair division of common wealth.

Yet we must not be supposed to measure out even to these, even to the most greedy and heartless and cowardly seeker after wealth, even to the vainest and silliest and least artistic of those who spend it, an unmeasured condemnation, or even any condemnation at all; each and every one of them is really moving under a divine and immortal instinct; each and every one of them is really seeking what seems his or her highest good. But what we would do, is, not to denounce, for denunciation is but the self-indulgence of Phariseism; what we would do, is to set up true standards for human life, to lay down clear and plain the outline of the law of natural as well as moral and spiritual well-being. To begin with, this: whatever civilization sets before it as its highest ideal the lust of sensation and the flattery of personal consequence, as our great atheist civilization undeniably does to-day, is unequivocally bad and evil, and is only held back from breaking out in open rottenness and putrefaction by the innate goodness and kindness of the human heart which steadily and stealthily works to stultify and counteract this thoroughly false and cowardly ideal. We cannot say it too often: the desire of wealth is a desire for personal consequence over and above our intrinsic worth; it is a desire for flattery, for adulation, for envy, and therefore altogether contemptible. And like all contemptible ideals, it reacts on those who hold it, and makes them mean and cowardly, and like all cowards, unjust and cruel. From this injustice and cruelty come that unfair division which builds up industrial fortunes, and that taking advantage of another's necessity which is the evil heart of usury.

So that to the charge of heathenism so smugly brought against the classes in our cities who do not join in the services of the church we would reply this: the whole national ideal, the worship of wealth, is essentially heathen in a sense never deserved by so-called heathen lands; it is more than heathen, it is cowardly and mean; and like all cowardly things, the father of infinite meanness. Let us see the churches definitely and clearly set up that other ideal: that a man's claim to consideration lies in the virtue of his creative will, in

his sense of the human lives and human hearts of others, in the light which he can catch from beyond the heavens: the gleam of our immortal selves. Only this ideal can make life wholesome again; only this divine and creative will can withstand and purify the sensual passions—a very minute percentage of which takes the form of what is called vice, while the large balance passes under forms perfectly recognized and approved.

It must be remembered that the heart of the matter is this: ever since mankind inherited free-will, and the right of wilfull action, we have been turning a simple and quite pure animal power to false uses; while nature provided only for the continuation of human bodies as vestures for human souls, man with his free-will turned the strong vital current to the uses and abuses of sensation, and so drifted into measureless and helpless sensuality. Do not believe that a sensualist is not ashamed of his weakness, feeling within him the protest of his immortality, nay more, the protest of wholesome animal instinct. But the weight of ill-lived ages is heavy on him, and he finds within him no countervailing power. Nor is there any countervailing power, or even hope of any, in these self-righteous protests against vice, and these crusades to drive the votaries of sense from one block of buildings to another. The only help lies in the creative will, in the ideal that our glory lies not in possessions, but in power; in that true health which finds its satisfaction in a robust will, flowing straight from the immortal sea of light, and not in the ceaseless storming of sensations, which after all bring not strength but weakness, not sense of fulness, but rather desolate misery, and swift oncoming of darkness.

Passions storm and rage in the outer layer of our characters: nothing coming from outside can check or still them. Nothing can work the transmutation but the inner glow of light and power, from above our personal selves, the strong descending tide of our divinity. Let this gospel of the inner kingdom be preached,—for this is the real teaching of the Galilean,—and the very sensualists will be the first to welcome it, to re-create themselves through the virtue of their own spiritual wills.

WILL AND DESIRE.

"Man, verily, is formed of Desire: as his desire is, so he wills; as he wills, so he works; as he works, so he becomes."

All periods of waiting are inevitably accompanied by vague expectancy, illusive dreaming and general unrest. In cessation of action the driving power of the WILL falls back into its colorless, impersonal condition, awaiting the fresh arousing of Desire, which ever stands behind the Will as the hand of a Vulcan using this mighty hammer to beat into form and shape the iron which is at last tempered into steel.

And this Desire without which man would remain as colorless and impersonal as the Will itself; this Desire which holds the ordinary man in its unrelenting grasp, driving his Will into ceaseless action, into eager and constant search for that which seems ever within his reach, yet ever eludes him, this Desire striking from within yet ever compelling him to go farther and farther without, which claims his idolatry, and with drop after drop poisons his cup of life, this Desire is at once his good and his evil Genius.

Yet what knows the ordinary man of this Genius with power to endow with all gifts, and to lift him into the realms of creative Will; to make his every thought an inspiration; infuse his every act with divine potency; make of his life's work a revelation, a true creation; or with equal power to drive him from out the Garden of Eden to toil and suffer, and gain at the price of his life not the Radiance and the Realm, not the waters of the eternal Fount within, but only the shadow of the Light, only a draught from the muddy stream of his lower desires—his evil Genius.

Again and again is he driven from the Gates of Paradise by the Angel with the flaming sword guarding the entrance; throwing wide the portals to those only who knock in the name of the Genius, who bear upon their hearts its sacred imprint.

Yet man is not to be mocked for all time. He may wander afar, and long may be the days of his wanderings. But the days of Eternity are those of his Genius, as is also the patience and power of the Immortals, and the bond between the earth-man and the man-god is intimate and strong.

As the innermost binds and controls the outermost, so shall the innermost man-god bind and control, assimilate and transfigure the man of earth; the man of illusive, evanescent desires.

Then will come that day of the Resurrection when, after the death and burial of the man's outer body of desires, there shall arise

in majesty and power, in purity and holiness his Soul's one desire, and in this shall he behold his transfiguration.

But before the day of Resurrection comes the day of death, when each must descend into the nether world of darkness and silence, and here must wait the hour for the command of his Lord: 'Arise, come forth!' These days of death are now upon us. Our trial is of the darkness, the silence, the waiting. The hour of our initiation draws nigh when the veiled Genius of Life lifts a hand to draw aside the veil that we may drink into our hearts the glory, the majesty and power, the sweetness and beauty long hidden from our sight.

These are holy hours indeed! We could not expect they should be other than hours of waiting. We have found the way into our secure retreat where the bustle and noise of the outer life ceases to reach us, where its turbulent waves no longer dash over our souls to bewilder and confuse.

We are preparing for the holy communion of the mystical bread and wine.

Our hearts are being laid bare—of our own will—to the clear-eyed light of the Soul within. We have offered ourselves as servants of the Most High, but the judgment has not yet been passed nor the service accepted.

Therefore do we wait.

But our waiting should not cause unrest; should not give birth to one thought of doubt, of fear, one sensation of weakness, of discouragement.

All this should long since have been washed from our hearts. For the soul has stirred, and its quickning will ere long create the divine life within us, living in which we shall ever more be blessed and glorified.

The divine Architect holds the plans for our work, wrapped and coiled in our inner consciousness as is the miniature plant within the Lotus seed, waiting but our recognition, and then the force of Will in a continuous, determined effort to bring to outer unfoldment and perfection the plan, already perfect within.

Now who but ourselves shall bring to the outer light this unfoldment; who but ourselves shall build truly from this secret plans of the divine architect within?

And as we recognize and build in accordance with these plans—which are none of our own making, but truly the conceptions of our divine Self—so shall come to us success or failure. This again is why we wait: that each may gain a glimpse into the centre of his being and read therein the secret which is for him alone. For until he reads it aright immortal being is not for him.

Waiting with us in the silence perchance there are some whose ears cannot endure it; some whom the gloom appalls, who tremble

at its ghostly uncertainty, who are not altogether of one mind as to whether it is best to tarry longer or take refuge in flight.

These are they who are not yet wholly dead to the lower desires and for whom there is no immediate Resurrection. Neither unveiling of the Genius of Life, nor revelation of the secret which will make of life a triumph.

For these are not yet ready for the sacrament of the Holy Communion. The hour of their acceptance has not yet struck. Therefore is this waiting heavy with doubt and fear for them. Yet would they feel its promise, could they but assimilate its stillness; would come into self-knowledge gaining with it increase of strength, dauntless resolution; become clear of head, steady of heart, could they banish doubt and conquer fear; could they, with one last supreme effort of will, evoke the Soul.

It may be that this is beyond their power. It may be that the shadowy forms of the darkness are no true Presences to them, but only meaningless vapors arising from they know not what.

It may be they regret the substantial forms of the life they have erstwhile resigned: that their gaze longingly seeks the light upon the distant horizon without, and would fain see that light embodied in some personality who shall lead them unto the Land of Promise; That their ears strain for the tones of command from some other than themselves, whose stronger Will and more positive Desire shall infused into them his own courage, his own hope, arousing them to action.

The propensity to lean is strongly rooted. The lesson of self-reliance is a difficult one. Yet, until it is learned and we cease to rely upon opinions and convictions of others as the guides for our own actions, there will be neither certainty nor stability, and the real strength of our characters will not be known.

To cling to ideals for their own sake is an achievement not easily come by; and the long inherited habit of falsely seeking their embodiment in personalities has created in us the spirit of idol-worship. From this has come much sorrowful disillusion, disappointment, despair. The perishable, the mortal, the finite cannot embody the Ideal.

And those who worship false Gods must sooner or later see them crumble and fall into ruins. Yet is it ever the embodiment only that is lost, never the Ideal. And the more often these outer forms, in which the Ideal clothes itself, are broken up and shown to be but temporary vestures, the clearer our vision and the nearer do we come to the infinite Real.

Upon this Reality must our strength be based. Only when we recognize in it the all in all of life shall the way to the gods be found and our feet travel that Path.

For Reality dwells in the innermost. But between the innermost and the outermost are many spheres which must be broken through to reach the Radiance and the Power.

E. D. P.

ORIENTAL DEPARTMENT.

Edited by Charles Johnston.

SONGS OF THE MASTER.

II.

The center and heart of the whole matter is the Great Initiation, the revelation of the divine. Their way of aspiration is the preparation for this; the way of realization is the fruit of it, the practical application to life, to the immediate position of the individual soul, of the sublime vision, the grand sweeping view of all life, of the great Life itself, mysterious and supreme, which Initiation gives. This magical and wonderful event, beside which all else past or to come in human life is dwarfed to insignificance, is not the invention or institution of any man or body of men; it is a providential law, a necessity inherent in the very being of the Eternal, the expression in will and act of the oneness between the single soul and the Soul of all.

The Great Initiation.

Perhaps we may make clearer the reality of this great and mysterious event by a parable, a simile. Think of a wayfarer, outcast, forlorn, wandering in the gathering dusk through a pathless wilderness knowing not at all which way he should turn, nor whether there be any pathway leading upward and onward to the house of his home. Sleep, the deep, motionless sleep of utter heart-weariness, comes upon the pilgrim; and while his body lies there lifeless and rigid on the night-overshadowed earth, his immortal brother descends to him, drawing the soul forth from the body, and carrying it swiftly to the beginning of the way, the clearly seen outset of the path that shall lead him homewards.

Nor does the beneficence of the immortal cease at this, but he carries the wondering soul swiftly forward, over ground now lit as clear as day, and full of color, for there is no night nor darkness for the eyes of the soul; the immortal carries it forward, passing swiftly through the gloom of overhanging forests where dim forms of fear flit among the boughs, along precipitous pathways, where are chasms so deep that no sun has ever lit their abysses, over ridges sharp as a razor's edge, where dizzy declivities sweep down on either hand; yet where the path is ever clearly marked, definite, and seen to be safe though very hard to tread.

Then the deserts and rocks and fearsome forests are left behind; there comes a glory on the grass, and radiance of flowers that catch

the purest colors of the sunrise ; the fountains murmur of peace and power, there is divinity even in the song of the birds ; and there before the wondering eyes of the pilgrim soul rises the house of his home, the resting-place from all sorrow that so long has haunted him, full of shining, the present abode of the water of life.

So swift has been his journey that it seemed to consume no measure of time ; and even the journeying itself shrinks away in thought before the one vision of the radiant goal ; then, when the soul has drunk the heavenly fountain and drawn itself up to the full measure of its immortal power and stature, the great brother beckons to it again, and then comes swift-winged return along the traversed path. Once more so rapid is the flight of the twain who are yet one, that time seems to stand still to let them pass ; yet once more every detail, every rock and stone and tree on the road stands out in clear sunlight, and prints its image on the memory of the soul.

The Return.

The wanderer awakes again into the body, thrilling through and through with the awe and splendor of his revelation ; there is still the blackness of night across the desert wilderness where he lies, and the howling of winds, and the moaning of wandering unseen beasts. But to him there runs through the blackness an inner shining, as when a tapestry of black is warped with threads of gold, and there are other voices than the wailing of the wind and the cry of the birds and beasts of prey : voices jubilant and exultant, that sing aloud in his heart of the glory that is for evermore. Then little by little the gleam goes out of the night-air ; gloom steals up closer and closer to him, and at last slips through the doorway into his heart ; the clear image of the mountain-soaring way he has beheld, grows gradually fainter, becoming at last dim as the memory of a dream. But one thing he still holds bright as day in his heart,—the image of the opening of the path, where the desert shapes itself into the first semblance of a road. This remains, it even grows clearer and clearer, as the rest fades, and at last the image begins to cry out to him with clear and imperious voice : Let there be no more lingering and delay ; the moment for setting forth is Now.

The gray and inhospitable dawn steals over the desert, with chill lights that only bring out the desolation hid by kindly night ; but the cold light also brings its revelation. For the traveler who deemed himself alone, and sorrowed for himself most of all because of his loneliness, now finds himself surrounded by a great company, haggard and worn and downcast ; knowing nothing of whither they

would go; seeing nothing of each other, but spell-bound and glamor-cast, so that each one talked aloud to himself, with hurrying and meaningless words, or burst forth in senseless laughter, or broke down in pitiful tears. Each one supposed himself alone as far as all others were concerned, yet saw around him a band of phantoms, dim shadows, all variously distorted images of himself, and with these he talked or lamented, with these he laughed or wept.

The Setting Out.

But there is one miraculous thing which now befalls the pilgrim. As though some of the radiance lingered luminous on him; as though from him resounded some of that piercing, soul-compelling melody that echoes for ever around the fountain of life,—by these or whatever causes distinguished, it is evident that each of the sorrowing company, though seeing none of those around, can at least see him. And with what startled joy and hunger of companionship they cry out to him for help and pity; with what stretching forth of hands, trembling of pale lips, lighting up of haggard faces. And he, the pilgrim, burning to set forth upon his journey, yet finds himself compelled to stay. These too are seeking the path; these too are thirsting for the immortal fountain; these too seek the house of their home. Once and again, he breaks away from their importunity, and sets forth strong and confident across the desert, knowing that soon his feet shall be set firm upon the path he has been so many ages seeking.

Yet their faces haunt him. The pity of their outcry draws him back. Their lamentation is far keener than before, for the face of a friend had appeared to them out of the lonely desolation, and now that face is withdrawn. For he presently learns that they can see him only when his eyes are turned full upon them, and when he tries to go before them they lose him utterly, and cry out in the awful misery of their pain.

The pilgrim with a sinking heart, as he thinks of that divine pathway, yet with a strong exultation rising within him against all reason, turns back again to rejoin the spell-bound throng. And with what infinite gladness they welcome him, with what lighting up of eyes that had grown tear-dimmed at his going; with what glad tremulousness of lips that try to smile. Nor is this his only reward, though this were reward enough. For he sees with marveling and astonishment that he is already at the beginning of the path, which he had thought far away, and which he had believed himself to have turned back from, surrendering all search of it to succor these.

The Moment of Choice.

Such is the mystery of the Great Initiation, as far as parable and symbol can make it clear. And the infinitely pitiful law of our divinity has decreed that not once only shall that sublime vision descend upon the pilgrim, but that at every obstacle overcome, at every stage of the journey conquered, and most of all, for every one of these his brothers set upon the path, the pilgrim shall be rapt forth from the darkness of his body by the twin immortal, and once more borne along that soaring way, till they come together to where the meadows are luminous with enameled flowers, where there is choral melody in the singing of the birds, where the sunshine eternally glints and gleams from the spray of the fountain of life.

The immortal brother bends down to him again and again, gathering him up to join his winged flight, and swift as an eagle he is carried through the blue pathways of the ether, and borne forward to full vision of the shining goal.

And on waking there is ever that hour of glowing joy and full remembrance, knitting the end of the dream into his daily life, so that what lies closest to him remains clearly seen even when the great dream fades, and he has instant and unwavering conscience of what he should do next.

For every man, there comes somewhere in the endless series of his lives, one life which shall be the turning-point; and in that life there is one hour of firm resolve, which sets the crown on all the past, and opens the door to the luminous future. It is an hour of silence and of loneliness, with no counselor but his own innermost soul, and none to tell him which way he should turn, nor even that his time is come. Yet such is its intimate divinity, that the soul knows well the hour of its birth into his life; if there be those who seem to shrink and hesitate, be certain that they are not yet ripe, that there is some vital lesson still unlearned, that a weak link in their chain of faith has to be strengthened. For these, for whom it is written that they may not now pass forward, do not utter vain regrets; it is thus far best for them, for soundness and ripeness they must have who pass through that door, and these they have yet to gain. They are but sharing the common fate of all living, and for them too the splendid hour will dawn; what does it matter that they must first pass through the silence, since in the silence there is infinite peace?

NOTES AND REVIEWS.

In our January number, we dwelt at some length on the point that henceforth the FORUM must cease to be merely a channel of communication among ourselves; that we must use it not so much to help each other as to help the rest of the world. We wish now to ask how many of our readers took us seriously? Or to be personal and direct, did you think we merely spoke in jest, talking for the love of talking, and with no clear idea of what we meant?

* *

If so, you had better guess again. Let us point the matter in this way: After you had dutifully read your copy of the FORUM, with an inward glow of self-approval, what did you do with it? Did you lay it carefully aside, with a vague intention, which you will never carry out, of having it bound at some future date? Or did you instead try to think of some friend or enemy who ought to read it too; and, turning thought instantly into act, straightway send it through the mails? The two shorter articles were specially chosen for this very purpose, and we shall lean even more heavily on this end of the matter, in coming numbers.

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There is another purpose in these shorter articles, which we shall now make plain. They are meant to be reprinted. Whoever sees the force of this, is requested to act. Mark the article, in the last number *The Karma of Nations*, or *Electro-Chemistry*, with a bold decoration in red pencil, and take it or send it,—better the former,—to the Editor of your local paper, pointing out the excellence of the articles, the intelligence of his readers, and the fact that he is invited to reprint it as a free contribution, on the one condition of acknowledging its source: THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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All readers who do this, and who are successful at first trial, are requested to send their names to us, with the name and date of the paper in which the article appeared, and the cutting containing it. We shall presently organize the matter quite methodically, arranging to send advance proofs to all papers willing to reprint, but of this, later. Accept this counsel: Never let thought cool before turning it into act. All readers who fail at the first attempt are requested to read the first five verses of the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke.

In the present number, the unsigned article on the Sins of a Great City is especially suited to these two methods of distribution. Our readers should remember that it is a very diminutive local paper nowadays which has not at least ten thousand readers, and then reflect that, as we cover nearly every State in the Union, we may quite easily reach hundreds of thousands in the next few weeks, or millions before next New Year's Day.

* * *

The *Lotus-bluchten* for January contains the beginning of Dr. Hartmann's valuable contribution to the future Biography of H. P. Blavatsky, with much that is of great interest, bearing on Dr. Hartmann's own life. The *English Theosophist* writes well on Socialism; we shall return to this later on. The *Lamp* still continues to strengthen the very tendencies which it deploras, giving new life to worn-out forces, instead of turning all its energies resolutely towards the future, and the great ideals of the dawn.

* * *

"THE MEMORY OF PAST BIRTHS."

Twenty-five years ago it was quite unusual to find in the west a believer in the doctrine of reincarnation. An occasional Buddhist from sympathy or intuition, or a spiritist after the manner of Kardec, might now and then be met with. To-day there are thousands and rapidly increasing thousands outside the T. S. who say without a moment's hesitation, "I believe in rebirth," or reincarnation. This moreover, in the face of the fact that they cannot accurately define the process, or grasp all the metaphysical details, or psychological facts in its support. It is accepted *prima facie* on account of its inherent reasonableness, and because of the anti-thetic unreasonableness of all opposing theories. Now with all these no less than with students in the T. S., the great questions are, "Why do I not remember past lives"; "How can I recover memory of past existence". Charles Johnston has answered these burning questions in a fifty-page quarto with the above title.

As a plain matter of fact the following should be known to all readers of the FORUM, if they have not already discovered it from the "Oriental Series." There is probably no other man in Europe or America to-day who knows Sanscrit well, that ancient language of the Sages of the far East, and who, at the same time is thoroughly familiar with the philosophy and science of the soul, which, in song and story, parable, allegory and myth, taught the people of 5,000

years ago (to go back no further) that Wisdom Religion that created the splendid civilization, that Patriarchal government that made old India and Egypt great. Others may know Sanscrit as well, but no writer known to the world to-day knows equally well the Wisdom Religion. This is not to pass to students as a badge of authority to dominate the will and annul freedom, but as an opportunity to be seized, a privilege to be prized; and yet, something more. It is something to be utilized and appreciated. The spirit of Mr. Johnston's writings, his faultless English, the high ethical tone, and the genuine altruistic spirit that pervades them all are to be noted and appreciated. More than anything else that can be named it faces the New Century with the epitome of the past, and the promise and potency of the real T. S. movement. Mr. Johnston's modesty might even exclude this plain statement from the FORUM with which he has had much to do in the past, and promises to have more to do in the future, but I shall insist on the right and so discharge the duty of saying it. Some of our members are asking "where is the old T. S."; others, "what can we do to forward the Great Work." Here is the answer to one and all. Not only buy and read, and distribute this splendid thesis, but make it possible to re-establish the old "*Path*" as an agency through which the new regime, the revival after the great "sifting", the rejuvenated Theosophy may henceforth be given to the world and help to build the new civilization; and this means first, appreciation; second, devotion; and then *money*. The door of opportunity is wide open. By cyclic law it is unprecedented in the history of man. The worker, trained under the eye of H. P. B. waits only the word of opportunity, as he has long waited the fullness of time. If we are ready to seize the opportunity, the greatest triumphs of the old T. S. in the past will be dwarfed into insignificance by what may be accomplished in the near future. The world is ready to listen, ready to read, and our work of rejuvenescence and then of conquest lies open as the day. Let the past bury its dead while we reincarnate a grander mission, a new life.

J. D. BUCK,
President T. S. A.

Setting aside the works of Mme. Blavatsky, and with respectful deference to the much that is so excellent in the writings of Mrs. Besant, Colonel Olcott, Mr. Judge, Mr. Sinnett and a few others of less note, it must be admitted that most Theosophical Literature so-called has been very imperfect, either as to knowledge of the sub-

jects treated or in their literary presentation. In neither of these respects is this the case with Mr. Charles Johnston's recent quarto on "*The Memory of Past Births.*" The author enjoyed the advantage of an intimate personal association with Mme. Blavatsky, not merely as a *pupil*, but as an able *student*. And in addition to this qualification, he possesses in his own right, deep insight into the genius and philosophy of the Theosophical movement, by reason of his wide acquaintance with ancient and modern literature, history and events. A knowledge of the Sanscrit language, in which so much of esoteric lore has been recorded, backed by rare intuitive power to construe the *meaning* of these half-hidden, half-revealed truths, together with acknowledged ability to render them in the very best English translation, has enabled Mr. Johnston, in "*The Memory of Past Births,*" to produce a most valuable treatise of Reincarnation. This is a book acceptable to the many intelligent and cultivated people who must be reached not so much through their intuition as by way of their reasoning faculty, and as such, is something pre-eminently needed at this time in the Theosophical movement. The price at which it is sold precludes any consideration of financial profit, and liberal-minded persons, whether members of Theosophical Societies or not, may wisely lend their assistance to its dissemination.

A. H. SPENCER.

Price: 20 cents; six copies for \$1.00; cloth, 40 cents.

Order direct from the author, address: Flushing, New York.

NOTICE.

The Treasurer is obliged again to remind the Members of their dues, which are as follows: Branches should send an amount equal to One Dollar for each member, out of their Branch Treasury funds. This should have been already provided for, and should not depend upon a special collection at this moment. Members at large should each send Two Dollars to the Treasurer direct.

A. H. SPENCER.

Treasurer, T. S. A.

P. O. Box 1584, New York.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA.

FOUNDED BY H. P. BLAVATSKY AT NEW YORK IN 1875.

Its objects are :

- 1st. The formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood without distinctions of race, creed, sex, caste or color.
- 2d. The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences.
- 3d. The investigation of the unexplained laws of nature and the psychic powers latent in man.

The Society does not pretend to be able to establish at once a universal brotherhood among men, but only strives to create the nucleus of such a body. Many of its members believe that an acquaintance with the world's religions and philosophies will reveal, as the common and fundamental principle underlying these, that "spiritual identity of all Souls with the Oversoul" which is the basis of true brotherhood; and many of them also believe that an appreciation of the finer forces of nature and man will still further emphasize the same idea.

The organization is wholly unsectarian, with no creed, dogma or personal authority to enforce or impose; neither is it to be held responsible for the opinions of its members, who are expected to accord to the beliefs of others that tolerance which they demand for their own.

The following proclamation was adopted at the Convention of the Society held at Boston, April, 1895:

"The Theosophical Society in America by its delegates and members in Convention assembled, does hereby proclaim fraternal good will and kindly feeling towards all students of Theosophy and members of Theosophical Societies wherever and however situated. It further proclaims and avers its hearty sympathy and association with such persons and organizations in all theosophical matters except those of government and administration, and invites their correspondence and co-operation.

"To all men and women of whatever caste, creed, race or religious belief, who aim at the fostering of peace, gentleness and unselfish regard one for another, and the acquisition of such knowledge of men and nature as shall tend to the elevation and advancement of the human race, it sends most friendly greeting and freely proffers its services.

"It joins hands with all religions and religious bodies whose efforts are directed to the purification of men's thoughts and the bettering of their ways, and it avows its harmony therewith. To all scientific societies and individual searchers after wisdom upon whatever plane and by whatever righteous means pursued, it is and will be grateful for such discovery and unfoldment of Truth as shall serve to announce and confirm a *scientific basis for ethics*.

"And lastly, it invites to its membership those who, seeking a higher life hereafter, would learn to know the *Path* they tread in this."

Applications for membership should be addressed to the President, Dr. J. D. Buck, 116 W. 7th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio. Admission fee, \$1.00. Annual dues, including subscription to THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM, \$2.00. Theosophical literature can be obtained from the W. Q. Judge Publishing Co., P. O. Box 1584, New York, N. Y.

THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

The Society is not responsible for any statements therein unless contained in an official document. Questions, answers to questions, opinions and notes on Theosophical subjects are invited.

Subscriptions \$1.00 per annum. Single copies 10 cents.

All communications should be addressed, THE FORUM, P. O. Box 1584, New York.